No. CLX.

FRENCH'S STANDARD DRAMA.

822
In2w
1855

THE WEDDING DAY.

A COMEDY, IN TWO ACTS.

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

WITH CAST OF CHARACTERS, STAGE BUSINESS, COSTUMES, RELATIVE POSITIONS, &c., &c.

AS PERFORMED AT THE PRINCIPAL THEATRES.

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STANDARD DRAMA.
THE ACTING EDITION.
No. CLX.

THE

WEDDING DAY;

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS.

BY

MRS. INCHBALD.

WITH CASTS OF CHARACTERS, COSTUMES, EXITS AND ENTRANCES, AND ALL THE STAGE BUSINESS.

AS REFORMED AT THE

LONDON AND AMERICAN THEATRES.

New York:
SAMUEL FRENCH,
121 NASSAU STREET.

CAST OF THE CHARACTERS.

	Walnut street, Philadelphia, 1855.	*Philadelphia*, 1819.
Lord Rakeland, -	Mr. E. L. Davenport.	Mr. Barrett.
Sir Adam Contest,	" H. Placide.	" Warren.
Mr. Millden, - -	" ———	" Hathwell.
Mr. Contest, - -	" Russell.	" Anderson.
John, - - - - -	" Young.	" Durang.
Thomas, - - - -	" Hackhurst.	" King.
Lady Contest, -	Mrs. Brougham,	Mrs. Wood.
Mrs. Hamford,	" Kinloch.	" Simpson.
Servants, -	Misses Bates and Price.	- Jackson, &c.

——:o:——

COSTUMES.

Lord Rakeland.—Dress hat, purple velvet coat, richly trimmed,—white satin waistcoat and breeches, silk hose, sword, shoes and buckles.

Sir Adam.—White satin coat, breeches and vest, richly trimmed,—silk hose, shoes and buckles.

Mr. Millden.—Drab coat, brown vest and breeches dark hose, shoes and buckles.

Mr. Contest.—Handsome blue coat, satin vest, brown breeches, richly trimmed, hose, &c.

Servants.—Full liveries.

Lady Contest.—Light colored silk, richly trimmed.

Mrs. Hamford.—Neat old lady's costume.

822
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1855

THE WEDDING DAY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment at Lord Rakeland's.*

Enter WILLIAM, R, *followed by* LORD RAKELAND.

Lord R. At home? to be sure I am! How could you make any doubts about it? [*Exit William,* L.] Deny me to my old acquaintance and favourite friend, Tom Contest!

Enter MR. CONTEST, L.

My dear Contest! I congratulate us both that your travels are completed, and that you are come to taste, for the remainder of your life, the joys of your own country.

Mr. C. Whether to taste joy or sorrow, I am yet in doubt; for I am uncertain in what manner I shall be received by my father.

Lord R. Have you not seen him yet?

Mr. C. No; nor dare I, till I know in what humour he is.

Lord R. In a good one, you may depend upon it; for he is very lately married.

Mr. C. To my utter concern, I heard some time ago, indeed, that it was his design to marry again. Pray, can you tell me who my new mother is?

Lord R. I am told she is very young, extremely lively, and prodigiously beautiful. I am told, too, that she has been confined in the country, dressed and treated like a child, till her present age of eighteen, in order to preserve the appearance of youth in her mother.

Mr. C. But who is her mother? Of what family is she?

Lord R. That I don't know; and I suppose your father did not consider of what family she was, but merely what family she was likely to bring him.

Mr. C. Yes; I have no doubt but he married on purpose to disinherit me, for having written to him, that I had fixed my affections upon a widow of small fortune, but one who was so perfectly to my wishes, that even his commands could not force me to forsake her.

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Lord R. And were you in earnest.

Mr. C. I thought I was then, but at present I am more humble. I have implored his pardon for those hasty expressions, and now only presume by supplication to obtain his approbation of my choice.

Lord R. Is she a foreigner?

Mr. C. No, an Englishwoman. We met at Florence, parted at Venice, and she arrived in London just four days before me.

Lord R. And when will you introduce me to her?

Mr. C. Are you as much a man of gallantry as ever?—If you are, you shall first promise me not to make love to her.

Lord R. As to that, my dear friend, you know I never make a promise when I think there is the least probability of my breaking it.

Mr. C. Then, positively, you shall not see my choice till I am secure of her. But I can tell you what I'll do: I'll introduce you to my young mother-in-law, if you like.

Lord R. My dear friend, that will do quite as well—nay, I don't know if it won't do better. Come, let us go directly.

Mr. C. Hold! not till I have obtained my father's leave; for, after offending him so highly as not to hear from him these six months, I thought it necessary to send a letter to him as soon as I arrived this morning, to beg his permission to wait upon him.

Re-enter WILLIAM, *with a letter*, L.

And here, I suppose, is his answer.

Wil. [*Giving the letter to Mr. Contest.*] Your servant inquired for you, sir, and left this. [*Exit*, L.

Mr. C. [*Breaking open the letter hastily, and reading.*] An invitation to go to his house immediately! Why, my father tells me he was only married this very morning! I heard he was married a week ago.

Lord R. And so did I, and so did half the town. His marriage has even been in the newspapers these three days.

Mr. C. Aye, these things are always announced before they take place; and I most sincerely wish it had been delayed still longer.

Lord R. I don't; for I long to have a kiss of the bride.

Mr. C. Psha! my lord. As it is the wedding day, I cannot think of taking you now; it may be improper.

Lord R. Not at all—not at all! A wedding day is a public day; and Sir Adam knows upon what familiar terms you and I are. Indeed, my dear friend, my going will be considered but as neighbourly. I can take no denial—I must go!

Mr. C. Well, if it must be so, come, then. [*Going*, L.] Notwithstanding the cause I have for rejoicing at this kind invitation from my father, still I feel embarrassed at the thoughts of appearing before him in the presence of his young wife; for I have no doubt but she'll take a dislike to me.

Lord R. And if she should, I have no doubt but she'll take a liking to me. So, come away, and be in spirits.

[*Exeunt*, L.

SCENE II.—*An Apartment at Sir Adam Contest's—table and chairs.*

Enter SIR ADAM CONTEST, R., *dressed in white, as a bridegroom.*

Sir A. Nothing is so provoking as to be in a situation where one is expected to be merry; it is like being asked in company to tell a good story, and to be entertaining; and then you are sure to be duller than ever you were in your life. Now, notwithstanding this is my wedding day, I am in such a blessed humour, that I should like to make every person's life a burden to them. But I won't!—[*Firmly.*] No, I won't! [*Looking off.*] Here comes my Lady Contest.

Enter LADY CONTEST, *slowly and pensively*, R., *dressed as a bride.*

Sir A. [*Aside*, L. C.] Now I will be in a good humour, in spite of all my doubts and fears.

Lady C. (R.) Did you send for me, Sir Adam?

Sir A. Yes, my dear: your guardian is just stepped home to bring his wife to dine with us; and I wished to have a few minutes conversation with you. [*Placing chairs.*] Sit down. [*They sit.*] I observed, Lady Contest, and it gave me uneasiness, that at church this morning, while the ceremony was performing, you looked very pale. You have not yet wholly regained your colour; and, instead of your usual cheerful countenance and air, I perceive a pensive, dejected—Come, look cheerful! [*Sharply.*] Why don't you look cheerful? [*Checking himself, and softening his voice.*] Consider, every one should be happy upon their

wedding day; for it is a day that seldom comes above once in a person's life.

Lady C. But with you, Sir Adam, it has come twice.

Sir A. Very true—it has; and my first was a day, indeed! I shall never forget it! My wife was as young as you are now.

Lady C. And you were younger than you are now.

Sir A. [*Aside, starting.*] No, I won't be angry!—[*Aloud.*] She was beautiful, too; nay, more—she was good; she possessed every quality. But this is not a proper topic on the present occasion; and so, my dear, let us change the subject.

Lady C. Pray, Sir Adam, is it true that your son is come to town?

Sir A. It is; and I expect him here every moment.

Lady C. And have you invited no other company all day?

Sir A. Your guardian and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Ploughman, you know, will be here; and what other company would you wish for besides me?

Lady C. In the country we always had fiddles and dancing at every wedding; and I declare I have been merrier at other people's weddings, than I think I am likely to be at my own.

Sir A. If you loved me, Lady Contest, you would be merry in my company alone. Do you love me? My first wife loved me dearly.

Lady C. And so do I love you dearly; just the same as I would love my father, if he were alive.

Sir A. [*Aside.*] Now could I lay her at my feet for that sentence! [*Struggling with himself.*] But I won't—I won't! [*Aloud.*] Answer me this: would you change husbands with any one of your acquaintance?

Lady C. What signifies now my answering such a question as that, when I am sure not one of my acquaintance would change with me?

Sir A. [*Violently.*] What makes you think so? [*Softening his voice.*] Your equipage will be by far the most splendid of any lady's you will visit. I have made good my promise in respect to your jewels, too; and I hope you like them.

Lady C. Like them! to be sure! Oh, my dear Sir Adam! they even make me like you.

Sir A. A very poor proof of your love, if you can give me no other.

Lady C. But I'll give you fifty others.

Sir A. [*Eagerly.*] Name them!

Lady C. First, I will always be obedient to you.

Sir A. That's well.

Lady C. Second, I will never be angry with you, if you should go out and stay for a month—nay, for a year—or for as long as ever you like.

Sir A. [*Aside, passionately.*] Sure I was not born to commit murder! I had better go out of the room. [*Rising in agitation.*] Oh! my first wife—my first wife! what a treasure was she! [*Sighing.*] But my treasure is gone!

Lady C. Not all your money, I hope, Sir Adam? for my guardian told me you had a great deal.

Sir A. And did you marry me for that? What makes you blush? Come, confess to me; for there was always a sincerity in your nature, which charmed me beyond your beauty: it was that sincerity, and that alone, which captivated me.

Lady C. Then I am surprised you did not marry your chaplain's widow, good old Mrs. Brown.

Sir A. Why so?

Lady C. Because I have heard you say, there was not so sincere a woman on the face of the earth.

Sir A. [*Aside.*] And, egad! I almost wish I had married her! [*Aloud.*] By what I have now said, Lady Contest, I meant to let you know that, in comparison with virtues, I have no esteem for a youthful or a beautiful face.

Lady C. Oh, dear! how you and I differ! For I here declare, I do love a beautiful youthful face, better than I love anything in the whole world!

Sir A. [*In a half-smothered rage.*] Leave the room—leave the room instantly! [*Lady Contest is going,* R.] No! [*Tenderly.*] Come back—come back, my dear! [*Aside.*] I'll be in a good humour presently; I won't use her ill; I have sworn at the altar not to use her ill, and I will keep my vow. [*Sitting, and affecting perfect composure.*] Pray, Lady Contest—pray, have not you heard from your mother yet?

Lady C. Not a line, nor a word.

Sir A. It is wonderful that she should not send us a proper address. There is no doubt but that every letter we have sent to her since she has been abroad, has miscarried. However, it will be great joy and pride to her, when she hears of your marriage.

Lady C. Yes; for she always said I was not born to make my fortune.

Sir A. Which prediction I have annulled. And, after

all—[*Taking her kindly by the hand.*] Come hither—come hither! And, after all, I do not repent that I have; for although I cannot say that you possess all those qualifications which my first wife did, yet you behave very well, considering your age.

Lady C. And I am sure so do you, considering yours.

Sir A. [*Aside.*] All my resolution is gone, and I can keep my temper no longer! [*Aloud, pushing her off,* R.] Go into your own chamber immediately! [*Following, and threatening.*] I'll—I'll—I'll——No—I'll go another way! [*Crosses to* L.

Enter JOHN, L., *meeting him.*

John. My young master and another gentleman. [*Exit,* L.

Enter MR. CONTEST *and* LORD RAKELAND, L.

Mr. C. (C.) I kneel, sir, for your pardon and your blessing.

Sir A. (R.) You have behaved very ill; but as you appear sensible of it, I forgive, and am glad to see you. But I expect that your future conduct shall give proof of your repentance. My Lord Rakeland, I beg pardon for introducing this subject before you; but you are not wholly unacquainted with it, I suppose.

Lord R. (L.) Mr. Contest has partly informed me.—[*Apart to Contest.*] Ask for your mother.

Mr. C. [*To Sir Adam.*] I sincerely congratulate you on your nuptials, sir, and I hope Lady Contest is well.

Sir A. [*Calling off,* R.] Desire Lady Contest to walk this way.

Lord R. I sincerely congratulate you, too, Sir Adam.

Sir A. Thank you, my lord, thank you!

Re-enter LADY CONTEST, R.

Sir A. [*Taking her hand, and presenting Mr. Contest to her.*] My dear, this is my son. [*To Contest.*] And this, Tom, is your mother-in-law.

Lady C. [*Laughing.*] Dear Sir Adam! I was never so surprised in my life! Always when you spoke of your son, you called him Tom, and Tommy; and I expected to see a little boy.

Sir A. And have you any objection to his being a man?

Lady C. Oh, no; I think I like him the better. [*Crossing to Contest.*] Sir, I am very glad to see you!

Mr. C. I give your ladyship joy! [*Salutes her hand.*

Lady C. I shall be very fond of him, Sir Adam; I shall like him as well as if he were my own.

Sir A. [*Aside*, R.] Now am I in a rage, lest, seeing my son a man, she should be more powerfully reminded that I am old.

Lord R. Sir Adam, you have not introduced me to Lady Contest.

Lady C. Is this another son?

Sir A. What, could you be fond of him, too?

Lady C. Yes, I could.

Sir A. And like him as well as if he were your own?

Lady C. Yes, I could.

Sir A. But he is not my son.

Lady C. [*Looking stedfastly at Lord Rakeland.*] I can't help thinking he is.

Sir A. I tell you he is not.

Lady C. Nay, nay, you are joking; I am sure he is.

Sir A. [*Loudly.*] I tell you, no!

Lady C. Why, he is very like you. [*Crossing to Lord Rakeland*, L., *and looking in his face.*] No, he is not so like when you are close. I beg ten thousand pardons, sir; you are not at all like Sir Adam.

Sir A. [*Aside.*] Zounds! now I am jealous; and I'm afraid my propensity will get the better of me. But no, it shan't—no, it shall not! [*Aloud.*] My lord, I beg your pardon, but I want half an hour's private conversation with my son: will you excuse us?

Lord R. Certainly, Sir Adam; I beg you will make no stranger of me.

Sir A. [*Taking Mr. Contest by the hand.*] Come, Tom! [*Aside.*] There! now I have left them alone; and I think this is triumphing over my jealousy pretty well. Well done, Sir Adam! well done—well done!

[*Exit with Mr. Contest*, R., *smiling with self-applause.*

Lord R. My dear Lady Contest, though I acknowledge I have not the happiness to be your son, yet permit me to beg a blessing on my knees. [*Kneeling.*] 'Tis this: tell me when and where I shall have the happiness of seeing you again?

Lady C. Dear sir, without any compliment, the happiness will be done to me.

Lord R. [*Rising.*] Enchanting woman! Appoint the time.

Lady C. I'll ask Sir Adam.

Lord R. No; without his being present.

Lady C. I don't know if I shan't like that full as well.

Lord R. Appoint a time, then—just to play a game at Cribbage.

Lady C. Or what do you think of Beggar my Neighbour? Would not that do as well?

Lord R. Perfectly as well—the very thing!

Lady C. But you must take care how you play; for it is a game you may lose a great deal of money by.

Lord R. But Sir Adam must not know of it.

[*They retire up.*

Re-enter SIR ADAM CONTEST, R.

Sir A. [*Aside.*] Resolutions come and go: I wish I could have kept mine, and stayed away a little longer!—[*Aloud, affecting good humour.*] What, my lord! here still? holding conversation with this giddy woman!

Lord R. [*Coming forward,* L.] I assure you, Sir Adam, I am very well pleased with Lady Contest's conversation.

Lady C. (c.) And I am sure, my lord, I am very much pleased with yours.

Lord R. We have been talking about a game at cards.

Lady C. But you said Sir Adam was not to be of the party.

Lord R. Yes, Sir Adam; but not Mr. Contest.

Lady C. No; indeed you said Sir Adam.

Lord R. Oh, no!

Lady C. [*Eagerly.*] Yes; because, don't you remember I said—and you made answer——

Lord R. I don't remember anything.

Lady C. What! don't you remember kneeling for my blessing?

Sir A. [*Crossing to Lord Rakeland.*] How? what?

Lord R. Sir Adam, it would be a breach of good manners were I to contradict Lady Contest a second time; therefore I acknowledge that she is right, and that I have been in the wrong. [*Exit, bowing with great respect.* L.

Lady C. [*Pulling Sir Adam's sleeve.*] Won't you ask him to dinner?

Sir A. Ask him to dinner! What a difference between you and my first wife! Would she have wished me to ask him to dinner? would she have suffered a man to kneel—

Lady C. I did not suffer him to kneel a moment.

Sir A. But my first wife was a model of perfection, and it is unjust to reproach you with the comparison. Yet I cannot help saying—would she had lived!

Lady C. And I am sure I wish so, with all my heart!

Sir A. [*Sighing heavily.*] But she was suddenly snatched from me.

Lady C. How was it, Sir Adam? Were you not at sea together? And so, a storm arose, and so you took to the long-boat, and she would stay in the ship—and so she called to you, and you would not go—and you called to her, and she would not come—and so your boat sailed, and her ship sunk.

Sir A. Don't—don't! I can't bear to hear it repeated! I loved her too sincerely. But the only proof I can now give of my affection is to be kind to her son; and as, by what he acknowledged to me, his heart I perceived was bent upon marriage, I have given him leave to introduce to me the lady on whom he has fixed his choice; and if I like her—

Lady C. Has he fixed his choice? Who is the young lady? what is her name?

Sir A. I did not ask her name.

Lady C. But I hope you will give your consent, whoever she is.

Sir A. And if I do, in a little time they may both wish I had not. Young people are so capricious, they don't know their own minds half an hour. For instance, I dare say you think very highly of that young lord who was here just now; but if you were to see him two or three times a week, you would cease to admire him.

Lady C. I should like to try. Do invite him here two or three times a week, on purpose to try!

Sir A. No, no! it's an experiment I don't wish to try.

Re-enter JOHN, L.

John. Mr. and Mrs. Ploughman are come, sir, and dinner is almost ready. [*Exit*, L.

Lady C. [*Looking at her hand, and screaming violently.*] Oh! oh!—oh, dear!—Sir Adam!—oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear!

Sir A. What's the matter? what, in the name of heaven, is the matter?

Lady C. I wish I may die if I have not lost my wedding ring! Oh! 'tis a sure sign of some ill-luck!

Sir A. [*Calling off.*] Here, John!

Re-enter JOHN, L.

Go and look for your mistress's wedding ring; she has dropped it somewhere about the house.

Lady C. I am afraid it was in the street, as I stepped out of my coach. Oh! indeed, Sir Adam, it did not stick close. I remember I pulled my glove off just at that time. Go and look there, John. [*Exit John*, L.] Oh, Sir Adam! some ill-luck will certainly happen to one or both of us, you may depend upon it!

Sir A. Childish nonsense! What ill-luck can happen to us while we are good?

Lady C. But suppose we should not be good?

Sir A. We always may, if we please.

Lady C. I know we may; but then, sometimes, 'tis a great deal of trouble.

Sir A. Come, don't frighten yourself about omens; you'll find your ring again.

Lady C. Do you think that young lord mayn't have found it? Suppose we send to ask him?

Sir A. Did you miss it while he was here?

Lady C. No, nor should not have missed anything, if he had stayed till midnight.

Sir A. [*Taking her hand.*] Come—come to dinner.—[*Crossing to* L.] But I must say, this has been a very careless thing of you. My first wife would not have lost her wedding ring.

Lady C. But, indeed, Sir Adam, mine did not fit.

[*Exeunt*, L.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment at Sir Adam Contest's—folding-doors*, C. F.

Enter LADY CONTEST, L., *followed by* HANNAH.

Lady C. (R.) [*Pulling off her cloak.*] Has anybody called on me, Hannah, since I have been out?

Han. Yes, madam, an elderly gentlewoman; but she refused to leave her name. She begged very hard she might have the pleasure of seeing you the next time she came, as she said she had particular business, and wanted to speak to you in private.

Lady C. Then pray let me see her when she comes again, for I am very fond of particular business.

Enter JOHN, L.

John. Lord Rakeland, if your ladyship is not engaged.

Lady C. [*Drawing Hannah aside,* R.] Oh! Hannah, Hannah! is this the elderly gentlewoman? — Oh! for shame, Hannah! — However, poor Hannah! don't be uneasy; I won't be very angry with you. [*To John.*] — You may desire his lordship to walk up. [*Exit John,* L.

Han. Upon my word, my lady——

Lady C. Oh, hold your tongue, Hannah! you know this is the elderly gentlewoman you meant. I am almost every bit as pleased! [*Exit Hannah,* L.

Enter LORD RAKELAND, L.

Lord R. My adorable Lady Contest!

Lady C. I hope you are very well; but I need not ask, for you look charmingly.

Lord R. And you look like a divinity! I met Sir Adam this moment in his carriage going out, and that emboldened me——

Lady C. Yes, sir, he is gone out for a little while with my guardian; but he'll soon be back. I suppose, sir, you called to play a hand of cards.

Lord R. No: my errand was to tell you, I love you—I adore you, and to plead for your love in return.

Lady C. But that is not in my power to give.

Lord R. You cannot possibly have given it to Sir Adam.

Lady C. I shan't tell you what I have done with it.

Lord R. You could love me—I know you could!

Lady C. If you were my husband, I would try; and then, perhaps, take all the pains I would, I could not.

Lord R. [*Kneeling.*] Oh, that I were your husband!

Lady C. You would not kneel so if you were, not even on the wedding day.

Lord R. [*Rising hastily.*] No, but I would clasp you thus! [*Throws his arms round her.*

Lady C. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I am afraid Sir Adam's first wife would not have suffered this!

Lord R. Why talk of Sir Adam? Oh, that you were mine, instead of his!

Lady C. And would you really marry me if I were single?

Lord R. Would I?—Yes, this instant, were you unmarried; this instant, with rapture, I would become your happy bridegroom!

Lady C. I wonder what Sir Adam would say were he to hear you talk thus! He suspected you were in love with me at the very first. I can't say I did; I suspected nothing, but I have found a great deal.

Lord R. Nothing to my disadvantage, I hope.

Lady C. No, nor anything that shall be of disadvantage to Sir Adam.

Lord R. Why are you perpetually talking of your husband?

Lady C. Because, when I am in your company, I am always thinking of him.

Lord R. Do I make you think of your husband?

Lady C. Yes; and you make me tremble for him.

Lord R. Never be unhappy about Sir Adam.

Lady C. I won't; and he shall never have cause to be unhappy about me, for I'll go lock myself up till he comes home. [*Going*, R.

Lord R. [*Detaining her.*] What are you alarmed at?—Is there anything to terrify you either in my countenance or address? In your presence, I feel myself an object of pity, not of terror.

Lady C. Aye, but this may be all make-believe, like the poor little boy in the song.

SONG.—LADY CONTEST.

In the dead of the night, when, with labour oppress'd,
All mortals enjoy'd the calm blessing of rest,
Cupid knock'd at my window, disturbing my ease,
"Who's there?" I demanded.—"Begone, if you please!"

He answer'd so meekly, so modest, and mild,
"Dear ma'am, it is I, an unfortunate child;
'Tis a cold rainy night, I am wet to the skin;
And I've lost my way, ma'am; so pray let me in."

No sooner from wet and from cold he got ease,
When, taking his bow, he said, "Ma'am, if you please—
If you please, ma'am, I would by experiment know,
If the rain has not damag'd the string of my bow."

Then away skipp'd the urchin, as brisk as a bee,
And, laughing, "I wish you much joy, ma'am," said he:
"My bow is undamag'd, for true went the dart;
But you will have trouble enough with your heart."

Re-enter JOHN, L.

John. A lady—a stranger, who, Mrs. Hannah says, your ladyship gave orders should be admitted.

Lady C. Very true. Desire her to walk in—show her up. [*Exit John*, L.

Lord R. Who is it?

Lady C. I don't know—I can't tell; I thought you had been her: but I was mistaken.

Lord R. Will she stay long?

Lady C. I don't know anything about her.

Lord R. Dear Lady Contest, do not let me meet her on the stairs; conceal me somewhere till she is gone. [*Going to the door*, C. F.] Here, I'll go into this dressing-room.

Lady C. Then you will hear our discourse.

Lord R. No matter; I will keep it a secret.

Lady C. No, no! you must go away—out of the house.

Lord R. I can't—I won't! Don't expose yourself before the lady.

Re-enter JOHN, L., *ushering in* MRS. HAMFORD.—*Lord Rakeland stands within the door*, C. F., *and listens.*—*Exit John*, L.

Mrs. H. [*Courtesying to Lady Contest.*] I beg pardon, madam!

Lady C. No apologies, madam.

Mrs. H. (L.) [*Looking about.*] I'm afraid I am not right.

Lady C. (C.) Yes, madam. Pray, are not you the lady who called this fternoon, and said you had particular business?

Mrs. H. I am. [*Gazing earnestly at her.*] And are you Lady Contest?

Lady C. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. H. [*In surprise.*] Sir Adam's wife?

Lady C. Yes, ma'am, Sir Adam's wife. Won't you please to sit down? [*They sit.*

Mrs. H. There is, then, Lady Contest, a very material circumstance in my life, that I wish to reveal to you, and to receive from you advice how to act. I am an elderly woman, and unfit for the enjoyment of many delights which this world bestows; yet would I soften, with the utmost tenderness and caution, every sorrow likely to fall upon the young. Such is the nature of my present errand to you; but, to my great surprise, I find you so very, very young——

Lady C. Yes, ma'am, thank heaven!

Mrs. H. And you are very happy, I presume?

Lady C. [*Hesitating.*] Y-e-s, ma'am—yes, very happy, all things considered.

Mrs. H. I am sorry, then, to be the messenger of news that will, most probably, destroy that happiness for ever.

Lady C. Dear me! what news? [*Rising.*] You frighten me out of my wits!

Mrs. H. You are now, Lady Contest, newly married; in the height of youth, health, and prosperity; and I am the fatal object who, in one moment, may crush all those joys.

Lady C. Oh, then pray don't! you'll break my heart if you do! What have I done? or what has happened to take away from me all my joys? [*Feeling in her pocket.*] Where's my handkerchief?

Mrs. H. Here, take mine, and compose yourself.

Lady C. [*Taking it.*] Thank you, ma'am.

Mrs. H. And now, my dear, I will inform you; and, at the same time, flatter myself that you will deal frankly with me, and not restrain any of those sensations which my tale may cause.

Lady C. Dear madam, I never conceal any of my sensations; I can't if I would.

Mrs. H. Then what will they be when I tell you I am Sir Adam Contest's wife? his wife, whom he thinks drowned, but who was preserved and restored to life, though not till now restored to my own country.

Lady C. [*Embracing her.*] Dear madam, I don't know anybody on earth I should be happier to see!

Mrs. H. But consider, my dear, you are no longer wife to Sir Adam.

Lady C. And is that all? [*Returning the handkerchief.*] Here, take your handkerchief again. [*Going to the door,* C. F.] And come you out of your hiding-place. [*Bringing forward Lord Rakeland.*] Come, come! for you need no longer conceal yourself now, or be miserable; for I have no longer a husband to prevent my being your wife, or to prevent me from loving you; for, oh! oh! I do—[*Checking herself.*] though I durst not say so before.

Mrs. H. (R.) May I inquire who this gentleman is?

Lady C. (C.) A poor man, that has been dying for love of me, even though he thought it a sin.

Lord R. (L.) I wish you a good evening! I beg pardon, and promise never to be guilty for the future.

Lady C. You are not going away?

Lord R. I have an engagement it is impossible to postpone. [*Going,* L.] Good evening!

Lady C. But you will soon come back, I hope? for I suppose you hold your mind to be my husband.

Lord R. Alas! that is a happiness above my hopes.

Lady C. Above your hopes!

Lord R. It is.

Lady C. Then it shall be beneath mine.

Lord R. I wish you a good evening!

[*Bows and exits*, L.

Mrs. H. And is it possible that you can think of parting with Sir Adam without the least reluctance?

Lady C. Pray, madam, when did you see Sir Adam last?

Mrs. H. Above fifteen years ago.

Lady C. He is greatly altered since that time.

Mrs. H. Still will my affection be the same.

Lady C. And so it ought, for he loves you still: he is for ever talking of you; and declares he never knew what happiness was since he lost you. Oh, he will be so pleased to change me for you!

Mrs. H. I hope you do not flatter me.

Lady C. I am sure I don't; I expect him at home every minute, and then you'll see!

Mrs. H. Excuse me; at present I could not support an interview. I will take my leave till I hear from you, and will confide in your artless and ingenuous friendship to inform Sir Adam of my escape.

Lady C. You may depend upon me, madam.

Mrs. H. [*Crossing to* L.] Adieu!

Lady C. Dear madam, I would insist on waiting upon you down stairs; but I won't stand upon any ceremony with you in your own house.

[*Exit Mrs. Hamford*, L.—*Lady Contest is going*, R.

Sir Adam. [*Without*, R.] Nobody so plagued as I am with servants!

Enter SIR ADAM CONTEST, R.

Lady C. Bless me, Sir Adam! I did not know you were come home!

Sir A. I have been at home this quarter of an hour.—The coachman has made himself tipsy on the joyful occasion of our marriage, and was very near dashing out my brains in turning a corner.

Lady C. And is that worth being in such an ill temper about? Ah! you would not be so cross, if you knew something.

Sir A. Knew what?—I have a piece of news to tell you.

Lady C. And I have a piece of news to tell you.

Sir A. Your mother is arrived in town; your guardian

heard so this morning, but he did not mention it to you nor to me till this moment, because he thinks it is proper for him to wait upon and acquaint her with our marriage in form, before I throw myself at her feet, to ask her blessing.

Lady C. Very well; with all my heart. And now, Sir Adam, what do you think?

Sir A. What do I think?

Lady C. What will you give me to tell you something that will make you go almost out of your wits with joy?

Sir A. What do you mean? Have I got another estate left me?

Lady C. No: something better.

Sir A. Better than that?

Lady C. A great deal better—you will think.

Sir A. [*Eagerly.*] Has the county meeting agreed to elect me their representative?

Lady C. No.

Sir A. What! anything better than that?

Lady C. A great deal better than that; and something the most surprising! Guess again.

Sir A. Psha! I'll guess no more. I hate such teasing—it is unmannerly! Would my first wife have served me so?

Lady C. Now you have hit upon it

Sir A. Upon what?

Lady C. Your first wife.

Sir A. Aye, I shall never see her like again!

Lady C. No, but you may see her.

Sir A. Eh!—What? what? what?

Lady C. She is alive, and you may have her home as soon as you please!

Sir A. [*Aside.*] What the deuce does the woman mean?

Lady C. Your first wife escaped in the long-boat;—as surprising a story as Robinson Crusoe! I have seen her, and she longs to see you.

Sir A. [*Trembling with surprise.*] Why, what do you mean? Alive?

Lady C. As much alive as I am.

Sir A. And what does she intend to do? [*Trembling.*] Poor woman! poor creature! Where does she intend to go?

Lady C. Go!—Go home, to be sure!

Sir A. Home!—What does she call her home?

Lady C. You are her home!

Sir A. I her home!—Come to me!—What can I do with her? and what is to become of you?

Lady C. Oh, never mind me!

Sir A. Yes, but I can't think to part with you. [*Weeping.*] I can't think to turn a poor young creature like you upon the wide world. Her age will secure her: she won't be in half the danger.

Lady C. Poor soul!—If you knew what she has suffered——

Sir A. And have not I suffered, too? I am sure I have lamented her loss every hour of my life;—you have heard me.

Lady C. And yet you don't seem half so much pleased at her return as I am.

Sir A. I cannot help being concerned to think what a melancholy twelve or fourteen years the poor woman has experienced—most likely upon some desert island, instead of being in heaven!

Lady C. But if you are concerned upon her account, you ought to be pleased upon your own, my dear—[*Checking herself.*] I beg pardon—I mean, Sir Adam!

Sir A. No, no; call me "my dear;" do not show reserve to me already; for if you do, you will break my heart. Can you resolve to part from me?

Lady C. Yes; because I know you will be so much happier with your first wife.

Sir A. But if our parting should give you any uneasiness——

Lady C. It won't a bit.

Sir A. No!

Lady C. No—[*Soothingly.*] not when I know you are with that good, prudent woman, your first wife. Will you give me leave to write to her a kind letter for you, and invite her to come hither directly?

Sir A. [*Despondingly.*] You may do as you please!

Lady C. Ah, I shan't be with you long, and so you may as well let me have my own way while I stay. [*Goes to a table, and writes—Sir Adam walks about, and shows various signs of uneasiness.*] Here it is—only a few words, but very kind; telling her to fly to your impatient wishes. [*Calling off.*] Here, John!

Re-enter JOHN, L.

Take this letter to Mr. Millden's immediately. [*Exit*

John, L.] Come, look pleased; consider how charming it is for old friends to meet.

Sir A. Yes, if they are not too old.

Enter MR. MILLDEN, L.

Mr. M. Sir Adam Contest, I come to inform you, that there is a lady in the next room who has been near fainting at the sound of your voice.

Sir A. (R.) And I believe I shall faint at the sound of her's.

Mr. M. Her son is supporting her to you.

Re-enter MRS. HAMFORD, L., *leaning on* MR. CONTEST.

Lady C. (C.) Dear Sir Adam, fly and embrace your first wife! [*Going to her.*] Dear Lady Contest, notwithstanding his seeming insensibility, he loves you to distraction. A thousand times has he declared to me, he did not think there was such a woman in the world.

Sir A. [*Aside.*] And I did flatter myself there was not.

[*Crosses to Mrs. Hamford.*

Mrs. H. Oh, Sir Adam!

Sir A. Oh, my dear! if you knew what I have suffered, and what I still suffer, on your account, you would pity me.

Lady C. [*Crying and sobbing.*] Good bye, Sir Adam, good bye! I did love you a little, upon my word; and if I was not sure you were going to be so much happier with your first wife, I should never know a moment's peace.

Sir A. I thank you. And at parting, all I have to request of you is, that you will not marry again till I die.

Lady C. Indeed, Sir Adam, I will not;—but then you won't make it long?

Sir A. I believe I shan't!

Lady C. And my next husband, whoever he is, shall be of my own age; but he shall resemble you, Sir Adam, in your principles of honour. And then, if my wedding ring should unhappily sit loose, I will guard it with unwearied discretion; and I will hold it sacred, even though it should pinch my finger.

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